



By Mr. William Cosby

As we enter the 21st century, we are witnessing a renaissance in motorcycling. From utilitarian roots early in the 20th century, motorcycling passed through its bad-boy image in the 1950s. With the gas crisis in the 1970s, motorcycles again became an attractive alternative to gas-guzzling cars.

Today, most riders feel motorcycling goes beyond a practical purpose. Motorcycle sales are up 20 percent. For some, it's cool to ride. Celebrities often advertise the motorcycling lifestyle as a part of their identity. Other riders are attracted to the performance "bang-for-the-buck" that today's motorcycles give. With a moderate down payment, you can ride a reliable, well-mannered, street-legal machine with a quarter-mile time in the mid-10s and a top speed approaching 180 mph.

Enter the Marine looking to add something exciting to his life—riding a machine with catapult acceleration and perhaps realizing a desire that parents squelched while he

was living at home. And it is a mistake to think this obsession applies only to the young Marine. Motorcycling is attractive to a wide variety of people.

A motorcycle salesman may salivate uncontrollably when such a perfect candidate for motorcycling enters the show

room. He sees the Marine and the motorcycle as the perfect marriage and is willing to make the deal of the century.

Salespeople aren't the only ones offering deals. Your command offers some that may not be as well known. As interest in motorcycling has increased, so have military and local training programs. For those who have already bought a bike, most bases offer no-

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cost training with you riding your own motorcycle. For those considering buying one, a good option is participating in a local learn-to-ride program. The cost is usually modest, and the bike and insurance are provided. In many states, successful completion of the course waives all or part of the license testing requirement.

Take advantage of the Marine Corps motorcycle training. Marine Corps motorcycle safety instructors are riders — most are enthusiasts. They can help new or potential riders get off to a good start helping select the right motorcycle and protective equipment. Hint: They don't work on commission — their services are free!

If you are considering getting into motorcycling, are a new rider, or have some experience, here are some things you should know:

1. Motorcycling is not for everyone. Riders are exposed to the elements. Motorcycles have limited carrying capacity. If you don't have an alternative means of transportation, or if you live in an area where it gets real cold or hot, a motorcycle may not be a good choice.

2. Riding is a high-risk activity. On a good year, you are at least 16 times more likely to be injured or be killed in a motorcycle crash than in a car crash. No matter how much you pay for your bike, no matter how technically advanced it is, no matter how cool you look, no matter how good your physical and mental skills are, you still are physically vulnerable.

3. The next time someone tells you, "I had to lay it down to avoid a crash," point out that the crash was to avoid a crash and suggest taking a training course.

4. Motorcycles and alcohol don't mix. New, unlicensed and untrained riders are at greater risk. Riders on new motorcycles are at greater risk. When they are about to crash, 37 percent of the riders take no evasive action — they hold onto the bars and crash. Too often, when the other 63 percent decide to take action, they hit the object they are trying to avoid. (Refer to comment 3.)

5. Fake helmets don't provide protection. The hard-core bikers you are trying to imitate are probably laughing at you, anyway.

6. Protective gear has an important purpose beyond protecting you in a crash — it helps you enjoy the ride and concentrate on the riding task.

7. If you have the need for speed, do it on the track, never on the street.

Finally, if you are going to do stupid things, don't do them on a motorcycle. You embarrass and annoy the people who are serious about riding. 🍷

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